

bureau. The decor of this room is blue. There is a door to the hallway at U. C., and a second door, connecting with the adjoining bedroom, at D. R. Again no windows are shown or suggested.

In both rooms the furniture and other items of stage dressing should be heavy and cheerless, in a massive, dark and essentially ugly mid-Victorian manner.

As the curtain rises the stage is empty and only the parlor area is illuminated. After a moment the double doors at U. C. open and Eleanor Vance enters, followed by Mrs. Dudley. Eleanor is a plain-looking, conservatively dressed girl in her late twenties. Mrs. Dudley, the housekeeper, is a stern, uncommunicative woman of sixty or so, who wears a dark housedress and a clean but faded apron. Eleanor steps into the room and looks about in frank curiosity, while Mrs. Dudley stands by the doors, her hands folded in front of her.

Start

ELEANOR. (Turning to Mrs. Dudley.) I gather I'm the first one here. (Mrs. Dudley nods.) Will there be many others? The doctor didn't say in his letter. (Mrs. Dudley shrugs.) You did say you were Mrs. Dudley?

MRS. DUDLEY. (Sharply.) I didn't say. But I am. (Impatient.) Do you want to go to your room or wait here? You'll be in the Blue room.

ELEANOR. (Slightly put off by Mrs. Dudley's coldness.) How nice. (Mrs. Dudley glowers.) I mean . . . how nice to have blue. It's always been my favorite color. (She manages a tentative smile.)

MRS. DUDLEY. Well?

ELEANOR. I think I'll wait here, if you don't mind.

MRS. DUDLEY. Suit yourself. Blue room's the first one on the right—top of the stairs.

ELEANOR. I'll find it. Thank you. (She turns away.)

MRS. DUDLEY. (Still in the doorway.) I set dinner on the dining room sideboard at six sharp. You can serve yourselves. I clear up in the morning. I have breakfast ready for you at nine. That's the way I agreed to do. I can't keep the rooms up the way you'd like, but there's no one else you could get that would help me. I don't wait on people. What I agreed to, it doesn't mean I wait on people.

ELEANOR. (Not knowing quite what to make of this outpouring.) Of course.

MRS. DUDLEY. I don't stay after I set out dinner. Not after it begins to get dark. (Ominously.) I leave before dark comes.

ELEANOR. I know. Dr. Montague mentioned in his letter . . .

MRS. DUDLEY. (Breaking in.) We live over in the town, six miles away.

ELEANOR. Yes.

MRS. DUDLEY. (Going on.) So there won't be anyone around if you need help.

ELEANOR. I understand.

MRS. DUDLEY. We couldn't even hear you, in the night.

ELEANOR. I don't suppose . . .

MRS. DUDLEY. No one could. No one lives any nearer than the town. No one else will come any nearer than that.

ELEANOR. (Resigned.) I know.

MRS. DUDLEY. (A little smile on her lips.) In the night . . . In the dark. (They look at each other in silence for a moment. Then Eleanor turns away, somewhat unsettled by Mrs. Dudley's recital. From off L. comes the ring of the doorbell.) Someone else is here. I'll go now.

ELEANOR. (Turning back.) Mrs. Dudley . . . (But Mrs. Dudley has gone leaving the doors open behind her. After a moment

Eleanor resumes her study of the room, and then crosses to the small door at L. She tries to open it, but it is locked. She turns and moves slowly back towards R., stopping to examine the ornate chess set at D. C. As she is looking at one of the pieces the double doors close slowly with a click. She turns sharply at the sound.) Mrs. Dudley? (There is no answer. Eleanor frowns and shivers slightly, then puts the chess piece down, and crosses to one of the chairs at D. L. She sits, picking up a book from the small table between the chairs. While she thumbs through it she continues to look about the room, as though trying to fathom its special personality. Then the doors are opened again and Theodora enters, followed by Mrs. Dudley—who remains in the doorway as before. Theodora is about the same age as Eleanor, but dark and rather exotic looking. A creature of mood and sudden impulse. Eleanor puts her book down and jumps up to greet her.) Thank heaven someone else has come. (Then, suddenly embarrassed by her bold-